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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 2ND BATTALION, 442ND INFANTRY
(attached to the 34th Infantry Division)
in the pursuit to the Arno in the vicinity of Suvereto, Italy, 26th June 1944
(ROME-ARNO CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Heavy Weapons Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY BATTALION IN A MEETING
ENGAGEMENT

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FOREWORD

In order to assist the reader, it will be necessary to give him a brief history of the combat team, so that he will better understand the unit and individuals concerned.

President Roosevelt, 4 February 1943, sent the War Department the following message:

"The proposal of the War Department to organize a combat team consisting of loyal American Citizens of Japanese descent has my full approval. No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship regardless of his ancestry....."

In accordance with this, the 442nd Combat Team was activated February 1, 1943, consisting of three infantry battalions, the 232nd Engineer Company (Combat) and the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. (1) Across the road from the newly activated unit was the 100th Infantry Battalion (Separate) which had been activated early in June, 1942, and consisted of volunteers from the Hawaiian National Guard. This latter unit joined the 34th Division early in September of 1943 and became famous as an assault unit at the VOLTURNO RIVER Crossing, the battle of CASSINO, the ANZIO Beachhead and the drive on ROME. (2)

The 442nd Combat Team trained at Shelby until April of 1944. It sailed for overseas on the 1st May, 1944--less one battalion. The 1st Battalion was redesignated the 171st Infantry Battalion (Separate) and remained in the States to provide replacements for the Combat Team.(3)

The personnel comprising both these units were Japanese-Americans, who had volunteered for military service soon after the attack on PEARL HARBOR. About seventy percent, initially came from the Territory of Hawaii, the remainder were Nisei (Stateside Japanese Americans) who were already serving in the army in non-combat units. There were a few Caucasian Officers who served with this distinguished unit.

These then, were the individuals and units, which formed the Infantry Team, that received it's first battle indoctrination on the 26th of June, 1944, and became acclaimed by more than one commander as the finest assault troops he had ever seen. (4)

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- (1) A-1 P. 9
 - (2) Personal Knowledge
 - (3) A-2 P. 3 & 4
 - (4) Personal Knowledge

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 2ND BATTALION, 442ND INFANTRY
(attached to the 34th Infantry Division)
in the pursuit to the Arno in the vicinity of Suvereto, Italy 26th June, 1944.

ROME-ARNO CAMPAIGN

Personal Experience of a Heavy Weapons Company Commander

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the first day of combat of the 2nd Battalion 442nd Infantry, attached to the 34th Infantry Division, near SUVERETO, ITALY the 26th June 1944, during the Pursuit to the Arno.

In order to give the reader a picture of events leading up to the Pursuit to the ARNO, it will be necessary to cover the major events leading up to the capture of ROME.

From bases in SICILY and NORTH AFRICA, early in September 1943 the British Eighth Army and the US Fifth Army successfully invaded the ITALIAN PENINSULA and made the first penetration into HITLER'S FORTRESS EUROPE. (See Map A) The two armies moved rapidly and by the 1st of October had captured the cities of NAPLES and FOGGIA. By November the first, both armies were confronted with a series of positions in depth, located generally north of the GARIGLIANO RIVER on the west and the SANGRO RIVER on the east. (5)

The allies spent the first part of the 1943-44 winter crossing the GARIGLIANO and SANGRO RIVERS and breaking the Winter Line, only to be confronted by the Gustav Line protecting the approaches to the city of ROME. (See Map A) The Fifth Army made two attempts to break through the dominating hills which barred the entrance to the LIRI RIVER VALLEY. The attempt at CASSINO, the key position in the German defenses, failed, after repeated attacks during the first three months of 1944. The second

(5) A-8 P. 220-225

attempt was made January 22 at ANZIO. A beachhead was forced and held by the Allies; a thorn in the enemy's side, engaging his tactical reserves. (See Map A) But it too failed to open a break-through north to ROME. (6)

On May 11, 1944, after heavy artillery and aerial preparation the Allied Armies in ITALY launched the drive, which in the first weeks of fighting broke the GUSTAV LINE and captured the city of CASSINO. This drive carried the Fifth Army in it's first two weeks of fighting from TERRACINA to a juncture with the Anzio forces below CISTERNA on the 25th of May. Now the roads to Rome were opened to the Fifth Army. (7)

In the late afternoon of 4th June 1944, beaten elements of the German Tenth and Fourteenth Armies, disorganized and torn apart by VI Corps and II Corps of the Fifth Army, which had battered their way through the GUSTAV LINE and out of the ANZIO BEACHHEAD, were in full flight north of ROME, first of the major Axis Capitals to be freed from Nazi Fascist Regime. (8) Pursuit of the enemy and smashing him as much as possible was the order of the day, following the broad provisions of operation order No. 1, issued by the Allied Armies in Italy on the 5th May. (9)

Two days after the capture of ROME--6th June, 1944, Allied Forces crossed the English Channel to open the long awaited offensive in FRANCE. This action which represented the major allied offensive in the west took precedence over the ITALIAN CAMPAIGN, both in men and supplies, actually, however, Fifth Army was less than half-way through it's campaign, and battles yet to come were to be severe, if less publicized than those of CASSINO and ANZIO. (10)

The fulfillment of the conference at TEHERAN, in IRAN, in which Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill, "agreed as to the scope and timing

(6) A-8 P. 225-229

(7) A-8 P. 287-288

(8) A-4 P. 1

(9) A-4 P. 9

(10) A-5 P. 268

of the operation to be undertaken from the east, west and south" in 1944 "for the destruction of the German forces", had begun. (11)

THE GENERAL SITUATION (See Map B)

On the day that ROME was captured, the Army Commander issued orders directing the Fifth Army to maintain it's relentless pursuit northwest of ROME. (12)

The tactical plan now was necessarily that of keeping in close contact with the enemy and smashing his retreat so as to cut off large bodies of his troops. The pursuit in conjunction with operations order No. 1 fell into two periods. From 4th of June to the 15th the advance was very rapid, through the gentle hill country north of the TIBER and in the OMBRONE VALLEY around GRASSETO, gains of 15 miles a day were not uncommon in the first few days of the pursuit. The next month, however, the chase led through more difficult country where the German defense functioned better and the gains were correspondingly slower. (13)

The army zone was naturally divided into two sectors; II Corps on the right which was pushing up Highway No. 2, VI Corps on the left moving up Highway No. 1 capturing the Port of CIVITAVECCHIA on the 7th of June and cutting across II Corps front entering VITERBO on the 9th. The 36th Division held all of VI Corps zone at 1200 hours on the 11th of June when the division and the coastal zone passed to the newly organized IV Corps (at this time our lines were nearly 65 miles north of ROME). II Corps was eliminated from action by the flanking movements of IV Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps, this completed the first part of the reorganization of the Fifth Army. (14)

A separate operation under control of Allied Force headquarters, using French troops, had taken the ISLAND OF ELBA off PIOMBINO on 17th-19th June, then protecting the left flank of our furthest

(11) A-8 P. 212
(12) A-6 P. 35-37
(13) A-5 P. 273
(14) A-5 P. 278

advance; on the right 8th Army was roughly abreast of the F.E.C. on the line LAKE TRAISMENO-PENGIA. (15) On the 21st of June the front lines of the Fifth Army stretched from a point eight miles north of GROSETTO near the west coast, eastward to the Eighth Army boundary in the vicinity of SARTRANO. The troops were entering the TUSCANY HILL Country. (16) It was here that General Crittenberger broadened the commitment of IV Corps to include two divisions. (17)(See Map C) This was done partly to meet the stiffening enemy opposition and partly to fill the widening zone as the coastline bent to the northwest. The First Armored Division, reinforced by the 361st Infantry was committed on the right of the 36th Division. The 36th Division had already turned northwest to keep it's flanks to the sea, and continued up Highway No. 1. (18) On the 25th of June this division on it's final day of combat in ITALY, brought about the fall of PIOMBINO, cut the road leading from Highway No. 1 to SUVERETO, and invested the town of CAMPIGLIA. (19)

THE 34TH DIVISION SITUATION & PLANS (See Map C)

Elements of the 34th Division had moved into their final bivouac areas near GROSETTO, ITALY, 24th June 1944. The units of the division had almost two weeks of rest and replacements had been received by the battle weary veterans. Moral in all units was excellent. Supply echelons had moved up close to the fighting front, with the capture of CIVITAVECCHIA, and replacement of parts, clothing and equipment was generally completed.

The Germans who had suffered a terrific beating were receiving new reinforcement units from southern France and northern Italy. The morale of their new troops was excellent, they knew that their primary job was one of delaying our advance by inflicting heavy losses in men and equipment. The Germans had excellent equipment and supply

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- (15) A-5 P. 280
 - (16) A-4 P. 49
 - (17) A-4 P. 51
 - (18) A-5 P. 281
 - (19) A-4 P. 53

facilities to accomplish this task, besides the added advantage of picking their own terrain on which to fight in the TUSCANNY HILL Country, which was ideally suited for slow retrograde movement. Outside of the enemy's advantage of terrain, the opposing forces were comparatively equal in combat efficiency. (20)

The 34th Division planned to accomplish the relief of the 36th by 1200 the 26th June, 1944. The division took over the same mission as it's predecessor, to advance rapidly in it's zone to the west and northwest, to maintain contact with the 1st Armored Division on the right and to protect the left flank of IV Corps. It's first objective was line just south of CASTAGNETO, ten miles north of the point where the division was to enter the line. The division left flank, traversed by Highway No. 1 and consisting of the coastal plain and a rough hill-mass extending northward from the CORNICE VALLEY, was assigned to the 133rd Regimental Combat Team, on a front of approximately seven miles. The center of the zone a four mile front was given to the 442nd Combat Team, astride the SUVERETO-CASTAGNETO road, while the four mile zone on the right went to the 168th Infantry Regiment. The 168th's mission was to contact the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron on the left of the First Armored Division. (21) The 135th Regiment was in division reserve. (22)

THE COMBAT TEAMS DISPOSITION AND PLANS (See Map D)

The combat team merged into the fighting forces, which made it famous throughout two armies, in a bivouac area a few miles from GROSSETO, ITALY, the 10th of June, 1944, per General Order #44 Headquarters, 34th Infantry Division. The forces that merged were the organic units of the 442nd Infantry and the 100th Battalion (Separate). Here the unit trained and prepared itself for combat until 21st of June, 1944. (23)

The regiment made it's final movement prior to combat from a

(20) Personal knowledge

(21) A-4 P. 54

(22) Personal knowledge

(23) A-1 P. 31

bivouac area near GRAVASSANO on the morning of the 25th and marched thirteen miles to it's final assembly area, four and a half miles northeast of FOLLONICA. (24) (See Map C)

To clear the center of the division zone, it was necessary for the combat team to take a trio of small villages situated on dominating hills; SUVERETO and BELVEDERE, located within one-half mile of each other, and SASSETA, about four miles north. Strong elements of the 16SS Panzer Grenadier Division had been inserted here by the Germans to bolster the weakening 19th G.A.F. Field Division, and it was against their naturally strong and well defended hill positions that the regiment was to launch it's attack. The terrain consisted of steep ridges, narrow valleys and deep ravines, with one narrow, twisting road connecting the villages. (25)

At 2400, on 25th of June 1944, the regiment, after receiving the Division order, issued the following plan of attack. (26) The third Battalion would move astride the SUVERETO-SASSETA highway, relieving elements of the 517 Parachute Infantry Regiment, attack SUVERETO and BELVEDERE, then move frontally to take SASSETA. The 2nd Battalion would relieve elements of the 142nd Infantry and continue the attack north, keeping the MASSERA-CORNIA CREEK on it's right boundary, protecting the regiments right flank, then cut the road north of SASSETA) to CASTAGNETO. The 100th Battalion was to be in reserve and follow the 3rd Battalion. (27) Line of departure for both attacking battalions --the line held by units to be relieved. Time of attack--0630 26th of June.

THE BATTALION IN THE FINAL ASSEMBLY AREA (28) (See Map D)

As the dusty Infantry men of the Second Battalion moved off the north-south road to SUVERETO into their final assembly area, at 1530 the 25th of June, it was apparent that the essence of battle was

(24) A-3 P. 17

(25) A-5 P. 56

(26) Personal knowledge; statement of Colonel C. W. Pence, then Regimental Commander of the 442nd Infantry, 14th October, 1949

(27) A-2 P. 17 and Personal knowledge

(28) Personal knowledge

very close. The remains of a small skirmish was quite evident in the center of the battalion assembly area where the bodies of German soldiers and several members of the 517 Parachute Infantry had fallen. The scene left it's impact on the men of the battalion throughout the remainder of the day.

Orders were issued by battalion, upon occupation of the area, for the final checking of all equipment for combat, the issuance of ammunition and the location of security. The companies spent the remaining hours of daylight complying with these orders.

After a belated evening meal, the battalion commander oriented the company commanders and staff on the situation up until the time the unit had moved into the area.....

The battalion had been following close behind the 142nd Infantry throughout it's movement during the day. The 517 Parachute Infantry and the 142nd Infantry had reached a point just south of a line drawn through CAMPIGLIA and SUVERETO, (See Map C) there, units would hold these positions until relieved by elements of the 442nd Combat Team on the 26th June. This line was approximately three and a half miles north of the battalions present location. Strong elements of the enemy had been encountered just south and east of SUVERETO, at the present time it was believed these units were of battalion strength and had withdrawn to SUVERETO. When committed on the 26th of June the battalion would attack as follows; E Company on the right and F Company on the left, G Company to follow the leading companies in reserve. H Company would initially place a machine gun platoon in direct support of the two leading companies. The mortar platoon would be in general support of the battalion. Battalion aid station at the bridge east of MOUNT PELOSO. Battalion supply point at the unimproved road junction southeast of MOUNT PELOSO. The battalion commander planned to be with

the leading element in the movement to the attack position. All units of the battalion would orient their personnel and plan routes to the road for possible night movement out of the area.

After this brief orientation and fragmentary order, the battalion commander, the S-2, S-3, the artillery liaison officer and H Company Commander made a detailed map reconnaissance of all forward areas in which the unit might be committed. It was too late for any ground reconnaissance prior to darkness and as yet we had no knowledge of exactly which unit we would relieve. As the picture of the terrain unfolded, it looked like very rough country, with many small streams, deep ravines and heavily wooded hills. From this map reconnaissance, two natural obstacles could be well defended; the hill-mass at SUVERETO-BELVEDERE, and the MASSERA-CORNIA CREEK VALLEY. Approaches to the hill-mass were obvious, but the crossing of the creek was difficult to determine. Finally, after much discussion and continual reference to the maps, the battalion commander decided, that, if the unit was assigned this area, we would cross the creek at a point east of the bridge which was on the north east slope of MOUNT PELOSO.

The regimental attack order was received by the Second Battalion at 0115--26th June, 1944. Essentially the battalion order followed the plan as outlined above, with the crossing of the MASSERA-CORNIA CREEK. More detailed orders, if needed, would be issued on the attack position. Line of departure would be the road running parallel to the MASSERA-CORNIA CREEK; H-hour, 0630 hours--26th June, 1944. E Company would cross the I.P., the road junction just north of the battalion assembly area, at 0530.

MOVEMENT TO THE ATTACK POSITION (29) (See Map D)

During the short time allotted for the battalion to be on the move, everyone from the battalion commander to the company rifleman was busily

(29) Personal knowledge

engaged in collecting his equipment and picking up his K-rations. There was some confusion but this was only natural due to the extreme darkness. The moon which had shone brightly during the early hours of the night was now conspicuous by it's absence. The heavy undergrowth and dense forest hindered the movement of individuals to their platoon assembly area, but the unit's movement to the initial point was orderly and remarkably quiet.

E Company crossed the I.P. at exactly 0330 hours with the battalion to it's rear in a column of companies. Order of march; E, F, HQ, G, H. The battalion transportation would follow and cross the I.P. at 0530 hours.

Difficulty was encountered along the route, because of two reasons; the lack of prior reconnaissance and also the inaccuracy of the maps which had been studied the evening before. The maps had not contained the maize of trails and mule paths which jutted off the route of march. In most instances, there was practically no distinction between the unimproved road and the trail or mule path. This unforeseen difficulty slowed down the movement to such an extent that the leading elements of the battalion had moved only a mile by 0430. If this slow movement prevailed the battalion would arrive at the attack position too late for any ground reconnaissance.

Orders were issued by the battalion commander for all company commanders to join him at the head of the march column. Dawn was breaking when the battalion commander's party arrived at the battalion observation post of the 142nd Infantry. A quick ground orientation was given by the commander of the unit to be relieved and the disposition of his troops which were located just forward of our attack positions and a variable 500 yards from the road, which was to be our line of departure. During the night this battalion had captured 23

Germans in the vicinity of the road junction, 100 yards forward of our proposed line of departure.

Based on his prior map reconnaissance and the present ground reconnaissance the battalion commander issued his attack order. Basically the tentative plan issued the evening of the 25th and the attack orders were the same.

THE BATTALION PLAN OF ATTACK (30) (See Map D)

The line of departure would be the road just east of the CORNIA CREEK: H-hour 0630.

The battalion would cross the line of departure with two companies echeloned to the right. Company F would be the base company and lead the attack, seize HILL 101, and send out a strong patrol to the west slope of HILL 161, the battalion objective. If this patrol succeeded, the remainder of the company would join it on the objective and await further orders. Company E would seize HILL 104 in it's sector and be prepared to assist F Company on HILL 161, send a squad to HILL 105 to protect the battalions right flank. The machine gun platoons of H Company would be in direct support--one platoon to each company. G Company in support of the battalion would initially take up positions on HILL 122 to protect the right flank of the battalion.

The 81mm mortar platoon of H Company would initially support the battalion from positions in rear of HILL 122 in conjunction with the mortar platoon of H Company of the 142nd Infantry. All mortar and arillery concentration would be on call. There would be no preparatory fires prior to the attack. The heavy machine gun platoon in direct support of E & F Companies would be prepared to support by fire from positions on HILL 122 and join their units immediately when their fires were masked. (At this point in the attack order, the battalion began to move into their attack positions and the battalion command group

(30) Personal knowledge

was seen moving across the MILIA CREEK immediately to the rear.)

The battalion ammunition dump was to be established as initially planned, at the unimproved road junction southeast of MOUNT PELOSO and the battalion aid station, in the house south of the bridge just east of MOUNT PELOSO.

The battalion command group would initially be located on HILL 122, then follow F Company. Radio silence would be maintained until the CORNIA CREEK was crossed. SCR 300 radios would be the only source of communication. The battalion command post would be at the bridge crossing MILIA CREEK.

After receipt of the battalion attack order at 0600 hours the company commanders hurried to their company attack positions. The day promised to be fair with few clouds in the sky.

NARRATION

MOVEMENT FROM THE ATTACK POSITION TO THE INITIAL OBJECTIVE (31) (See Map D)

Company F, led by Captain Akins moved across the line of departure in a column of platoons at 0630 hours the 26th of June, 1944. Captain Akins had decided that this formation would facilitate control, ^{as per plan} thru the woods on this side of CORNIA CREEK and the crossing north of the bridge.

At 0630 hours, Company E, led by Captain Crowley crossed the line of departure with two platoons abreast. This formation was used due to the wide, cultivated fields in this company's sector and the lack of any concealed approaches.

All elements of both companies were across the creek by 0715. Company F reported that it was about 300 yards beyond the stream and proceeding rapidly towards HILL 101. The Company after crossing the creek had moved into a wedge formation. (One German sniper had been

(31) Personal knowledge

killed by advance scouts on the forward slopes of the objective.) (32)
At 0730 E Company reported that it was moving up the forward slopes of HILL 104, visibility was becoming extremely limited due to the heavy undergrowth and woods. By 0730, G Company had occupied HILL 122 and all of the elements of the 142nd Infantry had been relieved.

At 0800 hours the battalion commander received a regimental order to delay any further forward movement until 0900. Efforts were made to contact E & F Companies, without success. The reconnaissance officer of H Company, who was on the other side of the creek, immediately to the rear of E Company, was contacted by the H Company Commander. The reconnaissance officer was instructed to send a messenger to E Company on it's initial objective HILL 104 with instructions to delay their attack until 0900. All efforts to attempt to reach F Company were futile. At this point, the battalion commander instructed the H Company Commander to keep his mortars in their initial position and the S-3 to maintain contact with regiment and to get Captain Aull of Company G to report to the observation post immediately. He then went forward to contact Captain Akins.

The battalion commander caught-up with Captain Akins at the latter's observation post on HILL 101. It was here that he learned that F Companies forward elements were already on the battalion objective HILL 161. From this forward position, they were observing an increasing amount of enemy activity between BELVEDERE and SUVERETO, including several tanks. (See Map D) This information plus the present direction of attack of the battalion, which was bringing it into rougher and more formidable natural obstacles, high underbrush and steep ravines, necessitated a change in the original attack order; if the battalion was to continue towards it's objective beyond SASSETA.

(32) Statement of Major Thomas Akins, then company commander of F Company on the 29th of October, 1949.

A CHANGE IN PLANS (See Map E)

The battalion commander formulated the new attack order at Company F's observation post. F Company would revert to battalion reserve. Company E instead of supporting F Company's seizure of HILL 161 would move to the left of the CORNIA CREEK and seize HILL 127. Company G from its position on HILL 122 would move up the ridge line east of the creek and seize HILL 221. Time of Attack 0930. Captain Akins was ordered to organize his company immediately and move back to the road, from there to follow the leading companies along the road east of CORNIA CREEK. (33) Using a messenger, he advised the E Company Commander of the change in plans.

The S-3 while waiting for the reappearance of the battalion commander learned the reason for the delay from the battalion executive officer by telephone. The third battalion had encountered the same difficulties as the second in their movement to the attack position and finally had become lost. Its crossing of the line of departure was delayed until 0900.

A messenger from Company E reported into the observation post with the following message: "E Company would have to move back towards the creek bank before moving forward to HILL 127." This would be necessary due to a steep embankment about 50 meters high on the north side of HILL 105.

It was while the S-3 was futilely trying to contact Company E that the battalion commander made his appearance and told the command group his change in the direction of the attack. He instructed Captain Aull of Company G, to move forward at 0930 and capture HILL 221, but not to move beyond CORNIA CREEK.

The battalion commander after being informed of the message from E Company, approved their movement back to the stream bank.

(33) Statement of Major Thomas Akins, then company Commander of F Company, on the 29th of October, 1949

The company commander of H Company was now faced with the problem of getting the machine gun platoon with F Company back and in support of G Company. He finally contacted Lt. Meyers, his reconnaissance officer, and told him to order the platoon leader of the second platoon back across the creek to support G Company. The reconnaissance officer, would stay with the forward elements of Company F, control the command post and the motor transportation of Company H which would meet him on the road. The mortar platoon leader, present at the observation post, was instructed to move two sections from their present positions behind HILL 221, by carrier to the road, from there to follow the forward elements of F Company. The remaining section to stay in position until it could no longer support the battalion.

At this time, everyone from the battalion commander to the two leading rifle elements assumed that Company F would move directly back to the road over the same route he had used for his advance to the initial objective.

By 0915 the battalion command group, including the heavy weapons commander, were on the road between the two attacking companies; E & G. Both units could be observed from this position. The battalion command net still failed to function and messengers were resorted to by the battalion commander to maintain control of E & G companies. (34)

The battalion anti-tank platoon was assigned the mission of protecting the road by fire from a position north of HILL 122. This location gave their guns excellent fields of fire directly down the road, and covered the only possible tank approach in the battalion area.

While waiting for the units to organize and change their direction of attack, the battalion commander received a brief report on the regimental situation. The Third Battalion did cross the line of departure at 0900 (35) and was meeting continuous rifle and automatic

(34) Statement of Lt. Col J. M. Hanley, Battalion Commander of the 2nd Battalion on the 28th of October, 1949.

(35) A-1 P. 33

fire from the approaches to SUVERETO. (See Map D) The 168th Infantry which was supposed to be on the road which the battalion was now astride, had not made an appearance and regiment had no information as to when they would enter their sector.

At 0925 with still no information of Company F, it was decided to hold off the attack of E Company until 1000. Company G would attack as planned and seize HILL 221. Messengers relayed this information to E and G Companies.

So far, the unit had moved from it's line of departure to the battalion objective, a distance of approximately two and a half miles, changed it's direction and moved a mile up both sides of the CORNIA Creek without hearing a shot fired by the enemy.

A MEETING ENGAGEMENT (36) (See Map E)

Two M-3 reconnaissance vehicles of the 34th Division breezed past the Battalion command group and continued north on the road. In their wake were two vehicles of the 2nd platoon of H Company. The section leader of these vehicles had been instructed to displace to the road and move by carrier to this location. Their movement to this position was a good one, it could cover the road for well over a thousand yards, thus protect^{ed} the left flank of G Company ^{as it moved} while moving to seize HILL 221.

As the company commander of H Company observed this section go into position on a small knoll just to the right of the road, Lt. Meyers came in over the company command net. He was in a house 300 yards north of CORNIA CREEK. The building was plainly visible approximately 1000 yards to the immediate front. Lt. Meyers, from this location, was observing two enemy tanks and approximately a company of enemy infantry moving toward his position just south of the LADANO and MASSERA Creeks. (37) Company F at this time, was to his left front, and moving slowly forward. This information was relayed by

(36) Personal knowledge

(37) A-3 P. 18

messenger to the battalion commander, who immediately came forward, directed the artillery officer to fire a concentration on this enemy activity with Lt. Meyers as the observer.

While the message was being transmitted to the fire direction center, heavy small arms fire became audible to the immediate front and light artillery mixed with high velocity shells began to fall in the vicinity of the battalion command group and the A. T. positions, covering a stretch of the road for almost two-hundred yards. Firing in this area continued for well over the next two hours with such intensity that the anti-tank gunners were forced to abandon their positions and seek shelter; but not until they had suffered numerous casualties. The battalion command group, which the battalion commander had left when he went forward to contact the commander of H Company, was also forced to move and seek cover in a deep ravine running perpendicular to the road. They also had numerous casualties, among them being the battalion S-3.

The battalion commander's immediate concern was F Company. Through Lt. Meyers it was apparent that the company was immediately engaged in combat just forward of the hill on which he was located. The enemy unit he had observed was still moving forward and was about 500 yards south of the creek junction. Company E was ordered to move immediately and seize HILL 127. By this maneuver the battalion commander was hoping to gain time, receive information of the enemy and assist Company F by fire. There was also the possibility that this movement would limit the enemy's chance of maneuver.

Company F, assuming that the battalion was in front, had moved by the most direct route from HILL 161 to the valley road. This movement had been accomplished by using the maximum amount of cover and concealment afforded by HILL 161 and HILL 127 to gain the CORNIA Creek road.

Astride the road the unit had moved in a column of platoons with the forward platoon sending out scouts to contact the remainder of the battalion. It was in this formation when it was engaged by the enemy.

It was while crossing the bridge over the CORNIA CREEK that Captain Akins became concerned about the whereabouts of the rest of the battalion. He received a message through the company 536 net, from the advanced guard commander that the point had just seen movement up ahead. He instructed his executive officer to halt the company after it had cleared the bridge and was well into the concealment of the trees on either side of the road. He then moved forward to contact the forward security elements. He reached the advanced scout and Sgt. Oyasato at the bend in the road. Captain Akins looked through his binoculars in the direction pointed out to him, at first glance, it was apparent that several German soldiers were moving leisurely, just off the road, in their direction. He ordered Sgt. Oyasato to immediately move forward with his squad and engage the enemy. The squad did move about 25 yards around the bend when it was subjected to heavy small arms and automatic fire. The platoon leader attempting to reach them was wounded and the 536 radio was practically riddled with bullets.

The wounded officer was placed in the shelter of the deep irrigation ditch on the left side of the road. Under heavy small arms fire Sgt. Oyasato deployed his squad on either side of the road using the irrigation ditch wherever possible for his men. A German tank, flanked by soldiers, appeared on the road to his front; he ordered the bazookas to engage it and the riflemen to fire at the infantry on either side of the tank. From his vantage point Sgt. Oyasato then engaged the tank with rifle grenades. Due to the intense fire of the squad the German soldiers were forced to withdraw. The tank stopped after several rounds

of grenades had landed immediately to it's front but continued firing down the road over the heads of this squad. Several men had been wounded and while they were being helped into the ditch, a self-propelled 88 mm began firing from the squad's right front, with the shells landing well to the rear. Sgt. Oyasata ordered all his men into the protection of the deep ditches and to fire at any German that appeared. He then learned that the batteries on the bazooka were dead and, consequently, there was no anti-tank defense in the squad. Small arms fire and the shells from the 88 mm exploding became more intense to the left rear of this squad's position. The tank now began to move off the road toward the creek with the self-propelled following. (38)

Captain Akins, after issuing his order to Sgt. Oyasato, had moved back to the rear of the first platoon. When he heard the small arms fire to his immediate front he signalled the remainder of the company behind him to move to the left of the road. The advance guard could be seen moving directly to his front between the creek and the base of HILL 128. After several futile attempts to contact the platoon leader of the first platoon by radio, he started forward and again reached the bend in the road.

From here he could see that this platoon was completely under fire of tanks and infantry. He then moved back to where his company had been signaled to go. The self-propelled which had fired over Sgt. Oyasata's squad was causing a great many casualties and a great deal of confusion. The second platoon had moved well forward and just to the left rear of the advance guard and at this time was engaging the tanks and infantry trying to come through the open area just east of the MASSERA Creek. The men in the vicinity of Capt Akins were caught between the fires from the tanks and the automatic fire of the enemy riflemen. He ordered these men to get into the deep ditches along

(38) Statement of Captain Henry Oyasato, then squad leader in the 1st platoon of Company F., 2nd October, 1949

side the road and for his 60mm mortars to engage the enemy infantry in the vicinity of the two tanks.

The terrain made it impossible to set-up the 60's in a covered position in the immediate vicinity. Two mortars did find locations further behind the hill, the third mortar went into action at once, manned solely by the gunner. This gun inflicted heavy casualties to the enemy infantry in the vicinity of the 88, before the German crew had located it and scored a direct hit. (39)

It was apparent to Captain Akins, that although the enemy's attack had dissipated immediately to his front, it was making progress on both flanks. He ordered the platoons in his vicinity, to pull back to the other side of the CORNIA CREEK and he sent a messenger to relay this information to the first and second platoons. From the south side of CORNIA CREEK his company would have a much better chance to fight the three tanks and the enemy infantry, which he estimated at better than one company. (40)

Lt. Meyers, after firing the battalion concentration on the enemy troops he had located, reported that although one tank had been disabled and there seemed to be numerous casualties, the other tank with enemy troops was reorganizing and preparing to move down the east side of the river. A platoon of this force was moving directly toward his position. He could hear almost continuous small arms and machine pistol fire and the infrequent sound of a heavier weapon, to his left front.

At this time, approximately 1230 hours, the battalion commander received two messages from the command post: "The Third Battalion had captured the town of SUVERETO at 1100 hours, but was unable to advance beyond, due to the intense fire of automatic weapons from the high ground in the vicinity of BELVEDERE. The 100th Battalion had

(39) A-1 P. 33

(40) A-7 P. 2

been committed at 1130 hours to drive through the gap on the Second Battalions left flank and seize BELVEDERE." (41) (See Map D) Message number two was as follows: "Received report signed Captain Aull, by radio, that the enemy occupies the forward slopes of HILL 221." (42)

Through questioning of the wounded appearing on the road from Company F's area, the battalion commander learned piece-meal the situation. From this information he decided that the German force in contact with Company F had been sent for the purpose of intercepting our forces. (43) He instructed his heavy weapons company commander to contact E & F Companies and give them what fire support was available in the battalion. Then to contact him in Company G's area, where he would establish a forward observation post.

THE EXTENT OF THE ENEMY'S ATTACK (See Map E)

Through contact with S/Sgt Okasako, then platoon leader of the machine gun platoon in support of Company E, over the company command net, the situation in Company E's area was made clear. They had driven a small enemy force from HILL 127 to a small knob ^{west of} northeast of their present position and were in the process of reorganizing. Captain Crowley was going to leave one platoon on HILL 127 for the security of the heavy machine guns, the 60mm mortars were already in position firing at the enemy occupied knob. One platoon would attack the northeast knob of HILL 127 while the remainder of the company would be in support. (This operation was successful. The enemy force was driven from the knob and withdrew toward the northwest. The platoon in this engagement suffered several casualties, including the company commander. Although this operation was successful, the information arrived too late for the battalion commander to make full use of Company E's position, which outflanked the enemy confronting F. Company.) Sgt. Okasako while sending this information, had observed the enemy force of

(41) A-1 P. 33-34

(42) Statement of Lt. Col J. M. Hanley, then Battalion Commander, October 23, 1949

(43) Statement of Lt. Col. J. M. Hanley, then Battalion Commander, October 23, 1949

tanks and infantry moving down the east bank of the creek, firing on Company F and threatening to outflank their position. He had already instructed his guns to open fire when they reached the sharp bend in the stream. The heavy weapons company commander ordered Sgt. Okasako to maintain this position until ordered to move. These machine guns covered the enemy force, to the left of Company F, with such a volume of accurate and sustained fire, that the enemy infantry was forced to seek cover and disperse. Several attempts by enemy infantry, supported by the fires of two Mark IV tanks, to dislodge these guns from their positions met with no success and each time the enemy was forced to withdraw towards LEDANO CREEK.

*1st
Section*
Before leaving to contact Company F, the heavy weapons company commander ordered the section of guns near the road to move to the house just south of CORNIA CREEK. From there they could mutually support the 2nd platoon and protect the withdrawal of wounded from Company F's area. Two sections of the 81mm platoon were ordered into position just east of the road in a deep culvert on the forward slope of the south U of HILL 221. This was the only position available due to the enemy's observed fire on the reverse slopes and the valley between HILL 221 and HILL 122. They were initially assigned the mission of interdicting the area 200 yards north of HILL 128 and also to deny the enemy the use of HILL 128.

6
Lt. Meyers was met while moving forward to contact Company F. He and the two enlisted men with him had to fight their way out of the house on HILL 128 and down the reverse slope, through German Infantry that had infiltrated behind. They had assisted three wounded men of Company F to reach the south bank of CORNIA CREEK. The H Company Commander sent him back to the company command post to facilitate the movement of ammunition forward and to notify the battalion executive

officer of the situation.

Enemy small arms fire and machine guns firing from HILL 128 and the houses on the forward slopes, completely denied the battalion the use of the COENIA CREEK bridge and the road 200 yards south of it. The wounded from Company F were forced to move down the steep embankment of the creek to the left of the bridge in order to reach the comparative safety of the south bank.

Captain Akins was contacted as he fought his way back through the Germans in the vicinity of the bridge. With him was about a platoon and a half of his company. They set-up positions just south of the creek, from the road to the stream junction. The remainder of this company was completely cut off and had followed the pattern set by Sgt. Oyasato early in the engagement. They were fighting the enemy from all directions from the deep ditches on both sides of the trail west of HILL 128.

Some of the men, due to sheer aggressiveness, had fought their way through the enemy and had to fight their way back by two's and three's to reach the south bank of the creek. Sgt. Oyasato's squad was forced to stay on the other side in the protection of the ditches, due to the number of wounded they were tending. By hand grenades and rifle fire, these small groups heroically beat off repeated enemy attacks. (44)

The heavy concentration of enemy artillery and self-propelled fire along the road to the rear ceased abruptly. It was extremely noticeable; all that could be heard now was small arms fire to the front and an occasional burst of machine-gun fire from Company E's area. This made it quite apparent that the 100th Battalion, launching its attack from the vicinity of HILL 161 must have seized BELVEDERE. (See Map D) The time was approximately 1330 hours. (45)

(44) Statement of Captain Henry Oyasato, then squad leader of the 1st platoon of Company F, 20th October, 1949

(45) A-1 P. 34

THE BATTALION COUNTERATTACK (See Map E)

As the heavy weapons company commander moved across the road to contact the battalion commander, the 81's began to fire at the houses on the west slope of HILL 128. The enemy machine gun in that vicinity had been silenced and the mortars were zeroing in on the area atop Hill 128, by the time he reached the observation post. The enemy force driven back by the machine gun in Company E's area, plus the troops engaged by Company F had by 1330 hours gained complete control of the long ridge extending northeast of HILL 128.

The observation post was a hub-bub of activity. The artillery liaison officer, in direct contact with the fire direction center, was ordering a concentration for the house atop HILL 128 and the area fired earlier. Lt. Stefnagle, a section leader of the 81 platoon, was directing the fire of the 81's in the vicinity of the "pink house".

The battalion commander after contacting Company G and finding the reported message ("the enemy occupied the forward slopes of HILL 221--signed Aull") false. Ordered Captain Aull to seize HILL 128 and hold it until further orders. After the issuance of these orders he established the observation post in it's present location. While here he received word from the battalion executive officer that the Third Battalion of the 168th Infantry had sent forward a reconnaissance party. He met this party on the road immediately behind Company F's present position.

Company G under the command of Captain Aull had seized HILL 221 at 1230 hours, under intense enemy mortar and artillery fire from the direction of SASSETA. (46) At 1330 hours it had crossed the OORNIA Creek and was now moving through the dense woods on the east slopes of HILL 128, it's objective.

At 1500 hours, the enemy force now estimated at battalion strength

made his last effort to cross the CORNIA-MASSERA Creek line. German machine guns were placed along the ridge line of HILL 128. The infantry and tanks could be seen assembling along the east bank of MASSERA Creek.

The battalion commander had all supporting weapons withhold their fires until contact was made with Company G at 1515 hours. Captain Aull's company began to appear on the north-east slopes of Hill 128. Almost instantaneously, the order was given to fire the mortars and artillery. The battalion concentration called down on the assembling enemy forces, so disorganized them that by 1600 hours they were in full retreat north of the juncture of the LEDANO-MASSERA Creeks. The enemy forces along the ridge were almost completely destroyed by the accurate firing of the 81mm's and the machine gun section which was still with Company G.

Company G pursued the enemy forces, by fire, to the juncture of the LEDANO-MASSERA Creek. A patrol sent out to maintain contact with the enemy was met by a strong delaying force and forced to stop on the east bank of MASSERA CREEK. Here the company reorganized, less one platoon, which was still on Hill 221, and stayed until relieved by elements of the 168th Infantry.

As the German force withdrew, it came in contact with Company A of the 100th Battalion, which had set up a defensive position at MICHELINO, covering the SASSETA-SUVERETO Road. As the retreating Germans appeared, the heavy machine guns of Company D opened up, killing many and scattering the rest into the hills. (47)

At 1730 hours, arrangements were completed with the Third Battalion of the 168th Infantry to relieve the battalion during the hours of darkness. The relief was accomplished by 2200 hours and the battle - weary veterans marched back through SUVERETO to a bivouac area.

(47) A-1 P. 35

SUMMARY (See Map D)

To briefly summarize this first day of combat, the following points are significant: Although it failed to gain it's objective north of SASSETA, the battalion did succeed in engaging a large force of the enemy that might have participated in the defenses along the SUVERETA-SASSETA Road. The observation obtained by it's movement to HILL 161, gave valuable information to the regimental commander, which influenced the successful operation of the 100th Battalion at BELVEDERE and the road to SASSETA. The movement of the unit up the MASSERA-CORNIA Creek, threatened the enemy flank and his defenses at SASSETA, to such an extent, that he was forced to send troops from BELVEDERE and SASSETA to meet this threat; thus weakening his main approaches which later in the day spelled his entire defeat all along the road to SASSETA. The enemy's losses in the battalion sector, though not definitely known, far exceeded our own. Though the fighting was brief and mostly in Company F's area, the Second Battalion had 42 men and officers killed or wounded during this action. Information is not available as to the ammunition expended but it is known that the expenditures of Company H in machine-gun and mortar ammunition far exceeded their day of supply.

The Regimental figures for the total number of enemy casualties is as follows: 178 killed, 20 known wounded, 86 captured. The figures for captured or destroyed equipment was 8 trucks, 19 jeeps, 13 motor-cycles, 2 antitank guns, 3 self-propelled guns, 2 tanks, 2 command cars, 2 half tracks, 1 81mm mortar and 1 battalion and company command post complete. (48)

The Regimental Commander, Colonel Pence, had this to say about the 442 Combat Team's, "Baptism of Fire". The combat team made many tactical errors, wasted much valuable time and committed other mis-

takes that experienced combat leading might have rendered unnecessary; but in future operations the lessons learned the first day by individuals and units was to their complete advantage." (49)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

There were many operations, in which the battalion took part that may have made better reading or story telling, but this first day of combat always stood as a guide for the unit, during the remainder of it's battles, in which it won many decorations, including three Distinguished Unit Badges, and showed much greater combat aggressiveness and initiative.

What guide posts were set up by this first day of action? They were numerous; but let us take the most significant ones brought out by the action and analyze them. These are: Reconnaissance (both during battle and prior to battle), Communication, Security, Control, Contact with Adjacent Units, and finally, the Enemy's Action and the Role of the Heavy Weapons Company.

1. RECONNAISSANCE

It is my opinion that lack of reconnaissance, by all echelons was one of the more outstanding points of criticism in this operation. Although the battalion received the order late and during the hours of darkness, it had anticipated certain contents of the regimental order. Why didn't it anticipate routes to the battle position? It would have been a simple matter to send a small patrol forward to contact the unit to be relieved and have these same individuals, guide the battalion to their battle positions. The map reconnaissance made the night before was of limited value due to their inaccuracy. If regiment, from it's observation post on MOUNT PELOSO had made a more complete visual ground reconnaissance of the area west of MASSERA-CORNIA Creek, it would have been obviously impossible to move a battalion in any

What?

Not clear

(49) Statement of Colonel C. W. Pence, then Regimental Commander of the 442nd Combat Team, 14th October, 1949

combat formation thru the rugged and heavy undergrowth running between HILL 104 north to LEDANO CREEK. Two more obvious missions could have been assigned the battalion. First, the cutting of the road north of BELVEDERE, in the rear of the enemy, could have been easily accomplished from positions in the vicinity of HILL 161, by the battalion at least four hours sooner than it was accomplished by the 100th Battalion. This would have speeded the Capture of SUVERETO by the Third Battalion and inadvertently the Regimental objective, SASSETA, and the road junction beyond SASSETA. Second, moving up astride the MASSERA-CORNIA CREEK, which was later adopted by the battalion commander, if assigned initially, could have speeded the movement of the unit to such an extent that it would have been in a more threatening position to SASSETA before being observed by the enemy.

Not clear

The companies of the battalion violated the cardinal rules of ground and battle reconnaissance in two instances. First, in moving from the initial objective to the new direction of attack, Company E, with a more thorough ground reconnaissance to it's front, would have located an accessible route to it's next objective, HILL 161. This was the route used by Company F in it's movement to the road, which accounts for the inability of the battalion to know the whereabouts of this unit until it was actually engaged by the enemy. Company F failed to send out patrols to reconnoiter it's forward movement and to contact either E or G Company. Captain Akins, in his initial order for the engagement failed completely to realize the importance of the terrain to his right, HILL 128. Battle reconnaissance, in units the size of platoons and companies, most of the time is brief and may in some instances be only a glance, but that brief look must of necessity, be accurate and afford the unit the best available terrain to fight on.

Not clear

2. COMMUNICATION

Prior to an attack, complete consideration should be given to the difficulties which may be encountered by terrain, the enemy and the operators in the actual maintenance of communication. The battalion in its plan had not considered the terrain an obstacle to radio communication, although it was known to be rugged with many draws and deep ravines. This knowledge if imparted to the operators may have influenced the unit's action more forcefully and speedily than the slow movement of messengers which had to be resorted to by the battalion commander. The ability of the enemy to monitor the command net, added to the confusion of orders at the battalion command post and necessitated the movement of the battalion commander to a position where he was less needed. It is difficult to say if anything could have been done during the fast moving situation later in the day, to relieve or improve the existing facilities. Wire may have been resorted to, but it is a time consuming method, and it is doubtful if it could have relieved the situation in time to bring about any earlier decision than was accomplished with messengers. To fight a unit efficiently, a leader needs a rapid means of communication during combat, so that his subordinates can act promptly and decisively in gaining and keeping the initiative.

3. SECURITY

Three very definite violations of security measures became evident from a study of this operation. First, in the enemy's monitoring of the unit's radio command net. Someone had let slip in his transmission the word "Aull", it is safe to assume that an intelligent enemy operator had picked up the word in the message and consequently, the enemy commander had made prompt use of it to confuse our forces. Operators should be imbued with the absolute importance of using code names in transmitting or verifying messages,

even in the height of battle this is of the utmost importance. Second, security violated by excessive movement along the road between E & G Company, by the anti-tank platoon, and the battalion forward command group. The complete lack of observed enemy activity, gave these units a false sense of security in their movements on the road and even in their gun and command post installations. All units of a front-line battalion, when contact is imminent, must at all times seek cover and concealment. If roads must be used, traffic should be staggered. Once a destination on the road is reached, covered avenues, when available, should be used to get off the road and into position. The above unit's complete disregard for the use of cover and concealed routes and positions, brought about the intense artillery and 88mm fire along the road in the battalions sector. Third, Company F moved by column astride the road and without adequate security, assuming that the balance of the battalion was to the front. It is a grave error, when in close proximity to possible enemy forces, regardless of what assumption seems logical and evident at the time, to ever move a unit astride a road in column. If this unit had used a more tactically sound formation in its movement with security moving well to the front and flanks, it is safe to assume that it would not have been surprised when the enemy was located to its immediate front, only yards away.

4. CONTROL

The extreme difficulty encountered by the battalion commander in controlling his unit was evident when the attacking units reached the initial objective. The primary reason for this, as brought out before, was communication; but other factors limited control, these were terrain, coordination and information on the situation.

Once E & G Companies reached the juncture of MASSERA-CORNIA Creek at widely separated points in difficult country without communication between them and with the reserve company already engaged with the en-

Not clear

emy, the coordinated combat effectiveness of the battalion was almost lost in the face of an enemy force with control and initiative. Although the battalion commander was on the front line, he was utterly powerless to completely avail himself of all the forces in his command. This was due primarily to the lack of rapid means of communicating his orders and plan of attack, secondly he was not completely aware of the terrain and situation confronting all elements of his command.

It is firmly believed, after a thorough study of this operation, if control had been maintained, attacking and driving the enemy from HILL 128 and it's vicinity could have been accomplished by a coordinated attack of E & G Companies, with the destruction of these enemy forces.

Better control of the unit would have been maintained if all elements of the battalion had been operating on only one side of the CORNIA CREEK in convergent movement, but control was sacrificed by separation of the units over the wide valley floor on both sides of the creek in a divergent movement.

In some cases control can be temporarily sacrificed, as in the case of Company E. Whether it was done here unintentionally or deliberately is not known by the writer. It is safe to assume that the almost complete lack of control by this unit in it's engagement with the enemy, spared it numerous casualties and gave it a better chance to reorganize on the south bank of CORNIA CREEK.

5. ADJACENT UNITS

It was almost impossible to maintain contact with the Third Battalion, due to the rugged country between the two units. If contact could have been maintained by the battalions, it would undoubtedly have speeded up the capture of SUVERETO and BELVEDERE. The Third Battalion became lost and it's crossing of the line of departure was delayed until 0900. It was this delay which also held up the Second

attempt to maintain contact w/ 3d Bn. Dragnet in rear

Battalions movement beyond the initial objective. If both battalions had advanced continually after crossing the line of departure at the time specified, 0630, it is safe to assume that the enemy would not have had the time to move troops to confront the battalion, and it's movement to it's objective would have been successful. *which was*

The unknown delay of the 168th Infantry in taking over it's assigned sector, was another factor which delayed the battalion movement. If a coordinated plan between the two regiments had been worked out beforehand, the movement up the valley would have been speedily accomplished. This delay caused the battalion to be deployed on an extended front, separated by a natural obstacle, the floor of the valley, which, as mentioned before, caused the complete loss of control and coordination of movement. *700 ft*

6. THE ENEMY'S PLAN OF ACTION

The enemy's plan of action was necessarily one of delay, but if it had been successful in this operation it may have pushed all the way to the road to SUVERETO and with the armor he had attached, would have delayed not only the regiments movement but also the Division. From all indication, it was a hastily conceived plan to hold the threat to his flanks, while the units on the SUVERETO-SASSETA Road fell back in an orderly fashion to SASSETA.

The tanks once they were across the MASSERA CREEK were limited in their movement, by the steep slopes of HILL 128 and the precipitous banks of both the MASSERA and CORNIA CREEKS. For the unlimited use of armor it was imperative that the enemy gain access to the bridge across the CORNIA CREEK. Only two tank approaches were accessible to the bridge, the road which wound around the slopes of the hill, but which was ably defended out of sheer necessity by the scattered remnants of Company F and the approach near the banks of the MASSERA CREEK, which was completely denied his use by the ability of the machine-guns, artillery

and mortars to shed the tanks of their protection, the supporting infantry.

If the enemy's plan had been successful in gaining the south bank of Cornia Creek, he would have split the battalion and completely annihilated the small force of Company F. This would have been a terrific blow to the morale of the battalion, from which it may never have recovered.

7. H COMPANY'S SUPPORTING ROLE.

The success of H Company in its supporting role of limiting and finally stopping the enemy's attack, can be attributed to the initiative of its platoon leaders and the closeness with which they maintained contact with the attacking rifle elements. The aggressiveness and anticipation shown by Sgt. Okasako in the employment of his platoon on HILL 127, completely caught the enemy by surprise, delaying and restricting his movement. The foresight shown by the 31mm platoon in being well forward, in anticipation of possible conflict, denied the enemy the use of HILL 128 for his supporting automatic weapons. Although the machine gun section near the bridge in no way influenced the conflict, it certainly was a great morale factor for the men of Company F, and was in an excellent position to contain any attempt by the enemy to cross the CORNIA CREEK BRIDGE.

LESSONS

1. Reconnaissance by all echelons of command must be continuous, and involves not only the enemy situation, but the terrain and the situation of our own troops as well.
2. Plans must be made well in advance for the utilization of all means of communication, especially in hilly or mountainous terrain.
3. Security, in close proximity to the enemy, must be maintained over all movement and operations by all elements of the command.

4. Control is essential to success in combat, a leader without control will experience extreme difficulty in communicating his orders and plan of attack. Control is difficult in divergent movement. In certain instances control can be temporarily released if it will merit a possible reduction of casualties.

5. Adjacent units should vigorously press the attack in their assigned sectors to prevent the enemy from shifting troops and supporting fires to units that have maneuvered well into his position. Plans should be made with adjacent units for control of critical terrain features dividing their sectors.

6. Armor in fighting infantry, needs the close support of the infantry soldier, for it's protection.

7. The Heavy Weapons Company must maintain continuous close support of all units within the battalion and, if at all possible, each platoon must mutually support each other.